



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Parliamentary News: May 2008

***Stop the Drop* – time for action on litter and fly-tipping**

In April, CPRE launched *Stop the Drop*, its campaign against the growing problem of litter and fly-tipping in the countryside. Our President, Bill Bryson, said: “Litter is becoming the default condition of the countryside. It is time that we – all of us – did something about this.”

A growing problem

The worsening nature of the litter problem in England is highlighted by the 2006/07 Local Environmental Quality Survey carried out by ENCAMS, which runs the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. This showed the headline statistic for local authority performance on litter dropping from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘unsatisfactory’; not one of the local authorities surveyed was rated as ‘good’. Across the UK, an estimated 30 million tonnes of litter is collected each year, at a cost to councils of more than £600 million. Fly-tipping – the illicit dumping of larger amounts of waste, often in rural or urban fringe areas – is also a burgeoning challenge. In 2006-07, councils dealt with more than 2.6 million incidents (up 5% on the previous year), and reported clear-up costs of £73.7 million. These figures do not take into consideration the costs of cleaning up fly-tipping on private land estimated at an additional £50 million; these costs are borne by the landowner.

While litter and fly-tipping affect all areas, there is evidence that waste is often left to lie longer in the countryside, and many clean-up campaigns have focused on urban areas.

Time for leadership

We are seeking to raise public awareness of litter and fly-tipping, and encouraging people to take their litter home. But some people will continue to offend, and these individuals must be sent a strong message that their actions are unacceptable.

The laws for dealing with litter and fly-tipping in England are pretty good, particularly following the passage of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. But at the moment they are not being properly enforced. We are calling on local authorities to make better use of their powers under the Act, including issuing fines to those who litter and fly-tip. The average fine for littering is £95, but all too few fines are handed out. And of the 2.6 million fly-tipping incidents in 2006-07, just 1,796 were successfully prosecuted; a roughly one in 1,450 chance of perpetrators being brought to book. Other landowners, including Network Rail and the Highways Agency, should also be doing more to clean up land they are responsible for.

We also want more leadership from central government, including more support and guidance for local authorities to encourage them to make use of their powers. The announcement in the Budget that the Government intends to take action on single-use plastic bags was welcome, and we were pleased to see the recent statement from Defra that Ministers will talk to the Local Government Association about giving councils more powers to pursue registered keepers of vehicles from which litter is thrown. We are also pressing for the Government to reconsider the case for a bottle deposit scheme.

Support our campaign

Parliamentarians can support our campaign by pressing Ministers to take action on litter and fly-tipping – contact Adam Royle (adamr@cpre.org.uk) for more information. We also urge MPs to find out what priority your local council is giving to clearing up litter and fly-tipping. You can support us by signing EDM 1634, and encourage constituents to visit www.litteraction.org.uk to find out about clean-up activities close to them.

Eco-towns - right idea, wrong place

CPRE is challenging the Government to reassess its proposals for 'eco-towns'.

We support the principle of ecologically sensitive development, and understand the need for more housing for a growing population. We are deeply concerned, however, by the locations of many shortlisted 'eco-town' schemes, which we fear will become car-dependent commuter towns. Many are contrary to, and would jeopardise the achievement of, agreed development plans.

Before the list of schemes was published, CPRE also produced ten tests that we feel eco-towns should meet – you can see these at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/news/view/471>.

CPRE's network of local branches is expressing its concern about ill-considered schemes. Local concerns include the lack of consultation, the choice of unsustainable locations, and the impact of more development on local infrastructure.

If you would like more information, or to get in touch with your local CPRE branch, contact Sam Redding.

The Climate Change Bill

CPRE is working with the *Stop Climate Chaos (SCC)* coalition to strengthen the Climate Change Bill. On behalf of SCC, EDM 736 welcomes the Bill but highlights the urgency of more radical action because climate change impacts are occurring at a faster pace than predicted.

The EDM has been signed by 257 MPs (so far), which shows the strong support for more action. The two vital amendments that SCC is pushing are:

- An increased CO2 reduction target, from 60 to at least 80%, by 2050, and;
- The UK's share of emissions from international aviation and shipping to be included in reduction targets.

We are now asking MPs to sign up to these amendments after the 2nd Reading (expected in late June), and to then vote for them at the Report. This will be the last opportunity to improve the Bill.

The Planning Bill returns

After a long wait, the Planning Bill returns for its remaining stages on 2 June. CPRE has been working in a coalition of environmental and civic organisations, with the support of more than five million people, to highlight our concerns about the Government's planning reform proposals. The large public response to the Government's consultation on the White Paper that led to the Bill showed the depth of public feeling on these issues.

At Commons Report, we are working with MPs to press for the Infrastructure Planning Commission to be made an advisory body only, and for the Secretary of State to retain decision-making powers on major infrastructure projects such as airports and power stations, to ensure that democratic accountability remains central to the planning process. We are also lobbying for all National Policy Statements (NPSs) to be created from scratch, rather than simply adapted from existing policies, and subject to proper consultation and environmental appraisal. NPSs should also be approved by a vote in both Houses of Parliament.

We welcome the direction some of the Government amendments introduced at Report – but there is much more still to be done if we are to have a truly accountable and sustainable planning major infrastructure projects. For more detailed briefings on the Planning Bill please contact Adam Royle.

We're here to help

Contact our National Office policy and campaigns team for information on our work, and how we can help:

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You can also find out more about our work by visiting www.cpre.org.uk